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SUBJECT: IRAQ NATIONAL DIALOGUE COUNCIL CONCERNED ABOUT SHAPE OF POLITICS IN IRAQ AND NINEWA

CLASSIFIED BY: Cameron Munter, PRT Leader, Provincial Reconstruction Team Ninewa, State.

REASON: 1.4 (a), (b), (d)

SUMMARY

1. (C) The Iraqi National Dialogue Council (INDC) in Ninewa is concerned about the shape of the new national government in Iraq. National assembly delegate Mahmood Al-Azzawi seems afraid Sunni Arabs might be "left out" from playing a larger role in the formation of the government. He said he would work to oppose private militias, such as Peshmerga and Badr, and corruption. Al-Azzawi asked for USG assistance to keep Iraq unified as "one people," and for help to move Iraq on to the world stage. He said, however, that such assistance should follow Iraq's lead. Al-Azzawi said he welcomes provincial elections planned for later this year. He said he hopes a new provincial government would be more representative and, if controlled by Sunni Arabs, more responsive to the needs of the people of Ninewa. End Summary.

2. (SBU) PRT Leader met with Iraq National Dialogue Council (INDC) provincial director and newly elected national assembly delegate Mahmood Al-Azzawi, and party spokesman Musadaq Al Chalabi, in Mosul on February 11. PRT Poloff was also in attendance.

FEAR OF DIVISIONS IN THE NEW GOVERNMENT

3. (C) PRT Leader welcomed Al-Azzawi and Al Chalabi to the PRT where the topic moved to concerns INDC members had regarding the formation of the new government in Baghdad. Referring to the Shia majority in the new national assembly, Al-Azzawi said he hopes the process to form the new government is inclusive. He said the most important issue should be limits on federalism and control of political party and private militias. Al-Azzawi said he fears the new government would interpret the constitution to allow for the creation of separate Shia and Kurdish units. He said such a plan would "carve up" resources and further "divide" the populace. Al-Azzawi said private militias, even those he considers as operating under the guise of the Ministry of Interior, such as Kurdish Peshmerga, are "illegal" and contribute to hostilities. He said political party militias, such as the Shia Badr Brigades, are "supported by Iran" to "divide Iraq." Al-Azzawi claimed the actions of these and Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) make the "USG look bad" to the Iraqi public who fail to make distinctions between them. He asked for USG assistance to address the issue.

USG ASSISTANCE AND RELATIONS WITH IRAQ

4. (C) Al-Azzawi suggested that the USG, with the Iraqi government, should concentrate in three areas: the economy, security, and preventing Iraq from dividing into separate federal units. PRT Leader replied that Iraq should take the lead on solving economic problems and that the USG would work to support those ideas. Al-Azzawi said a problem in the past with development assistance from the USG was "indecision." He said he believes this contributed to economic uncertainty and a rise in security problems. He agreed with PRT Leader that Iraq should take the lead in developing its internal politics, but that both countries need to work harder to understand each other's needs.

IRAQ MOVING FORWARD ON THE WORLD STAGE

5. (C) Al-Azzawi said, as a former opponent of Saddam Hussein who spent two years in exile in Turkey and was twice imprisoned for his actions against the regime, that he is pleased with Iraq's progress in the areas of freedom of speech and association. Al-Azzawi claimed the former regime kept contact with the outside world limited, which has complicated their ability to communicate effectively abroad. Al-Azzawi qualified

his statement by saying USG assistance would still be done on Iraq's terms and not that of the U.S. However, he claimed that Iraq "needs a strong relationship" with the USG if the country is to move forward. PRT Leader reiterated USG support by following Iraq's lead and respecting its sovereignty.

PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT OUTLOOK

16. (C) Al-Azzawi said he is looking forward to provincial elections later this year. He said he hopes Sunni Arab coalitions would "take control" of the provincial government. Al-Azzawi said the current government, which is dominated by Kurds, is "corrupt," "not representative," and "illegal." He said he believes provincial leadership should be made from the "different fabrics" of Ninewa but that any new government should not be based on "quotas." Al-Azzawi recommended a committee be established to select candidates based on their expertise rather than ethnicity. He claimed that once a new government is elected he hopes it works to remove non-Iraqi flags, such as that of the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG). He claimed such flags "cause conflict" among Ninewa's diverse groups. Al-Azzawi said he believes a new provincial council would help make Ninewa "more stable" by better addressing problems of security and terrorism. Al-Azzawi requested an increased presence of international aid organizations in Ninewa to help address issues of poverty.

COMMENT

17. (C) Over the past few months since INDC was established we have maintained close contact with Al-Azzawi and Al Chalabi. At first fervently opposed to the U.S. presence in Iraq, we have noticed that Al-Azzawi has mellowed. Perhaps this could be attributed to his recent victory in the national election and the realization that compromise will be necessary to achieve any sort of meaningful outcome in the new government. However, while he has relaxed on some issues, he is still adamant about certain topics that are sure to spur heated debate in the new government as it establishes the rules and procedures for the constitution. He is strongly opposed to the idea for separate federal units of control, especially for Shias and Kurds, for example. On the other hand, he has well-meaning desires to rid the country of its reliance on private militias, as well as to find solutions to government corruption. It is still uncertain, however, how effective Al-Azzawi will be on the national stage, and whether he and his colleagues will be relegated to opposition party status.

MUNTER